DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 403 080 PS 025 006

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TITLE Men as Workers in Childcare Services. A Discussion Paper.
INSTITUTION European Commission Network on Childcare, London (England).
PUB DATE 96
NOTE 56p.; Photographs may not reproduce well.
AVAILABLE FROM European Commission Network on Childcare, c/o Thomas Coram Research Unit, 27/28 Woburn Square, London WC1H 0AA, England, United Kingdom (free).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Child Caregivers; *Child Care Occupations; Child Development; Day Care; Day Care Centers; Early Childhood Education; Employment Patterns; Foreign Countries; *Males; *Nontraditional Occupations; Parent Attitudes; Personnel Integration; *Policy Formation; Sex Bias; Sex Differences; Sex Role; Sex Stereotypes; Work Attitudes
IDENTIFIERS Caregiver Attitudes; Caregiver Training

ABSTRACT

For some years, the European Commission on Childcare and Other Measures to Reconcile Employment and Family Responsibilities has given priority to the role of men as caregivers. Work in child care services remains one of the most gender-segregated occupations in the entire labor force, and this discussion paper adopts a clear position that more men should be so employed. The paper is concerned with three questions: (1) Why is it important to get more men employed in child care services? (2) What conditions are necessary to achieve this? (3) How can these conditions be achieved? There are two main sections. The first section examines the reasons for employing more men, considering the case in terms of children, staff, parents, men themselves, and the labor market. This section also considers some arguments against employing more men: that they lack sufficient competence or interest; that they will "take over" the profession from women; and that sexual abuse will increase. The second section considers what policies might encourage and support more male employment. It includes a series of questions to encourage discussions among all parties involved in child care services. The paper also presents examples of initiatives that have already been taken in a variety of countries, mostly Nordic. It starts with one of these examples, an "equal rights" center in Sweden that employs an equal number of male and female staff, to set the scene for the discussion that follows. Contains 19 references. (EV)

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Men as Workers

in Childcare Services

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European Commission Network on Childcare
and other Measures to reconcile Employment and Family Responsibilities

European Commission Network on Childcare and Other Measures
to Reconcile Employment and Family Responsibilities

Men as Workers

in Childcare Services

A Discussion Paper
Jytte Juul Jensen

This report has been prepared by the European Commission Network on Childcare and Other Measures to Reconcile Employment and family Responsibilities for Women and Men. The contents of the report reflect the opinion of the author. It does not necessarily reflect the European Commission's official position.

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FOREWORD

Both the European Commission and the Member States of the Union have made clear policy statements about gender roles and the need to support and encourage the role of men as carers.

- In its Green Paper on Social Policy, the Commission recognised that the gender-based division of family and employment responsibilities not only constrains women's lives but also deprives men of the emotional rewards resulting from the care and development of children;
- In the subsequent White Paper on Social Policy, the Commission argues that greater solidarity between men and women is needed if men are to take on greater responsibility for the caring role, and commits itself to looking at ways of addressing the issues of stereotyped roles of the sexes in society;
- In the Council Recommendation on Child Care, adopted in March 1992, Member States committed themselves to promote and encourage, with due respect for freedom of the individual, increased participation by men (in the care and upbringing of children) (Article 6).

For some years, the EC Network on Childcare and Other Measures to Reconcile Employment and Family Responsibilities of Men and Women (referred to below as the 'EC Childcare Network') has given priority to the role of men as carers and, more specifically, to the implementation of Article 6 of the Recommendation by exploring ways of promoting and encouraging increased participation by men in the care and upbringing of children. The Network's programme of work has included: analyses of mothers and fathers' employment in Member States; a review of leave arrangements for workers with children, including the use made by fathers of the various types of leave available to them; an international seminar focusing on measures that have already been taken in some countries to support change; a study to monitor newspaper coverage of fathers, fatherhood and men as carers; and a project about the involvement of fathers in childcare centres and the use of these centres to support change in gender roles[1].

While much of this work concentrates on fathers, this is not the only caring role that men can have. Another important caring role is working in childcare services[2], but unlike fatherhood few men currently undertake this role; work in childcare services (and other services for younger children) remains one of the most gender segregated occupations in the entire labour force. Our knowledge and experience in this area are extremely sketchy. We know very little about the advantages and disadvantages of men working in childcare services, the obstacles to more men being employed and effective strategies to increase the number of men working in these services.

It is in this context that this report has been prepared for the Childcare Network. It has been written by Jytte Juul Jensen, the Danish member of the Network and a member of the Network's 'Men as Carers Working Group', which also includes members from Belgium, Italy and the UK. Jytte is particularly well placed to write the paper. The Nordic countries have paid more attention to the issue of men working in childcare services (and indeed, more broadly, to the issue of men as carers) than other Member States, and have produced much of the work that is available on this subject. Jytte has also been the Danish member of the advisory group for the project Recruitment of Men for Public Childcare Services, which was establsihed under the Nordic Council of Ministers' Equal Rights Programme.

1. For details of the Network's publications, contact members of the Network; names and addresses are given at the end of this report.

2. The term 'childcare services' is used in this paper to cover the range of services providing care and education for children under compulsory school age and care and recreation for school-aged children.

The Nordic approach has been that it is important to increase the number of men working with young children. It is considered that children need both men and women workers. Men are accepted as workers on the same basis as women, although it is recognised that men and women may have different ways of working with children. The discussion has been about how to increase numbers.

In the UK, however, the debate has been much more equivocal, focusing on the risk of child abuse in childcare and other services and whether employing men increases that risk. Some writers have even suggested that, on these grounds, men should actually not be employed. The discussion, therefore, has been about why and if men should be employed in childcare services.

In the circumstances, the Network decided that the report should be prepared as a discussion paper, intended to stimulate debate, and that Jytte should be asked to write it from her personal and Nordic perspective. Thus while the arguments against employing men, and the worries about male workers, are acknowledged, the paper does take a clear position that more men should be employed. This is the position that the Network has also adopted and which has led it to propose that a target of 20% male workers should be worked towards over the next 10 years. However, the framework of a discussion paper allows plenty of scope for challenge and counter-argument from those who may disagree and who hold another perspective.

The discussion paper therefore is concerned with three questions: why is it important to get more men employed in childcare services? what conditions are necessary to achieve this? how can these conditions be achieved? There are two main sections. One examines the reasons for employing more men in childcare services; it considers the case in terms of children, staff, parents, men themselves and the labour market, including equal opportunities reasons. The section also considers some arguments against employing more men: that men lack sufficient competence or interest to do the job; that they will 'take over' the profession from women; and that sexual abuse will increase.

The second section considers what policies might encourage and support more male employment in childcare services. This section includes a series of questions, which can form the basis for discussions amongst all parties involved in childcare services, including the State, local authorities, private organisations, training institutions, trades unions, staff already working in services, parents – and last but not least, children themselves. As another stimulus to discussion and, hopefully, the development of policies, the paper also includes examples of initiatives that have already been taken in a variety of countries, mostly in the Nordic countries, but also in the UK.

It is with one of these examples that the paper starts. The case of an 'equal rights' centre in Gothenburg, employing equal numbers of male and female staff, sets the scene for the discussion that follows.

Peter Moss

Coordinator, European Commission Network on Childcare and Other Measures to reconcile Employment and Family Responsibilities of Men and Women

I. INTRODUCTION

An equal rights Childcare Centre

In 1988, the Equal Rights Board in the Municipality of Gothenburg in Sweden decided to open a childcare centre where the same number of men and women were employed, creating a workplace that could be considered "equal" by the workers, children and parents. A researcher was appointed to evaluate the project. The description that follows is my summary of the researcher's report (Granath-Sundqvist, 1992).

When our centre is described, interest is most often focused on the men. The women are just as important. It is in the interplay between the female and the male staff that the positive effects are achieved *(Female leader of the centre).*

The aim of the project is to get more men employed in childcare services and to give the children an environment where both men and women are involved in the care work. The question is often raised as to what sort of models we give our children in municipal childcare services. This question is not only a question about the employer's responsibility, but also a parental affair and a social responsibility. Another dimension is the work organisation where men and women must work side by side in mixed gender groups.

The research project takes work organisation as its starting point. The traditional sociological research about the division of roles in the labour market and the effect of gender on job seniority lie behind this research project. Most of this research investigates what happens when women enter a male-dominated place of work. And here the Swedish research results agree: women subordinate themselves to men; men leave if their job becomes "female-dominated"; and the women develop survival policies. What happens in a female-dominated place of work when men enter? What do the men and women say about themselves and each other? The method used in the research project is interviews with male pedagogues[3] (11 persons) and with female pedagogues (25 persons), both from the equal rights centre and from other childcare services with or without male employees. Observations of the children were not made.

After this centre had functioned for a year with equal numbers of women and men employed and with the understanding that it was an equal rights place of work, the conclusion was a definite "Yes" from the employed women and men to having men and women employed in the childcare centre. A "Yes" also came from the parents and the children – and from the employers.

The presence of men influences staff teamwork in that conversation is improved, different and broadened with subjects like politics – but the women still talk about women's things without the men joining in. At the same time, the way of communicating changes: men are more direct and this is appreciated by the women. Problems are solved more quickly. The typical way in which women communicate – turning things round and round, backwards and forwards, and being fearful of saying things directly and thereby causing a conflict – disappears. Both men and women find the childcare centre, with its equal numbers of male and female staff, unusually free of conflicts. The women adopt the male way of talking to one another without feeling that they are subordinating themselves. They really feel that it is better. As the report says:

How constructive is it to continue to call it subordination? Is it not just something that women come to think of as better? And is this not what equal rights supporters have been looking for in vain from male bosses for many years, namely an appreciation of the specific female way of doing things.

3. The term 'pedagogue' is used in Sweden and Denmark to refer to a trained worker in childcare services. In this paper, it is used interchangeably with the term 'childcare worker'.

In this centre you can find strong women with a powerful job identity, and this change must be recognized as a positive innovation. Women know what they want to do and how they will do it and maintain it too, even though men may have other ideas.

Another thing that strikes one is the way that men are accepted in childcare services. It is completely different from the way women are accepted at workplaces dominated by men. Everybody is positive towards the male pedagogues. For example, the female pedagogues are extremely positive. Some of them have even applied for a job in this particular childcare centre in order to be able to work together with men. None of them will go back to working in a single sex place of work. Research into women entering male workplaces shows the opposite – many men leave and the work in question attains a lower status.

The municipal employers are also very positive and supportive about the male pedagogues; for example, they are offered new, more "exciting" jobs. The question is never raised as to whether the men add something positive, only what and/or how much. All the parents are positive – at least after a short while. Two parents were negative in the beginning. They were worried about the men being competent enough to take care of their children. Both were single mothers each with a young daughter. Their worries disappeared totally after a short time.

From the interviews with the men, the following should be mentioned. With reference to the general reaction to them having chosen such a job, none of them had experienced resistance from the their own parents, but some had received negative comments like:

> ***When are you going to get a proper job?; I never believed I had brought up a boy who would become a childminder*** *(Mother);*
>
> ***I've always tried to make you into a proper man*** *(Father).*

From friends, the comments were mixed:

> ***A woman's job; A lot of "gays" must work there; What do you actually do all day?; Do you have to change their nappies?;***
>
> ***It's good that both men and women work in childcare centres.***

All the men had worked with children before they were trained as pedagogues. All of them like the work, although it is stressful and the wages are far too low. The positive side is the freedom to make one's own decisions and the feeling that working with children is important. As for changes, the men in the equal rights centre want the physical environment to be bigger. Also, many of them want to work with the older children and to work with planned activities like woodwork and music. Men working in centres with only a few men or just one man employed want more men appointed. The good relations between staff is emphasised, but mostly by men at the equal rights centre. They value the ability to talk to other men at work. Men working as the only man in a centre get comments from their female colleagues that the other men do not get:

> ***Don't make so much noise; You can kick a ball, can't you?***
>
> ***That's what boys do; It's better that I talk to the parents.***

Some have also experienced being over-protected by the women; for example, women workers packing bathing things when the men are responsible for bathing trips or women clearing up even if it is the men's turn.

The men are also positive about other male pedagogues, although some have negative comments:

> ***Before I started the pedagogue training I believed that I was the only man choosing this field who had pedagogic and sporting ambitions. I thought that the other men would be more or less "aunties" who sat around knitting and suchlike, but the majority were like me, even though there were some of the other kind.***

When the question was first put to the men about what differences there are between men and women in childcare centres, the answer was, at first, that there is no difference as both are trained and do things the same way. But during the interviews many differences came out:

> ***Men play differently with the children, fight more and are more direct;***
>
> ***Men are seen to be harder than women, tease more and try to toughen the children up;***
>
> ***We men are unfairly judged for what we do more than the women are;***
> ***The women are rather better at clearing up;***
> ***I feel that it seems as though, at any rate as far as the leaders are concerned, they can do more things at one time without getting stressed.***
>
> ***Most men have something special that they are good at like, for instance, music, carpentry, sports. Women are more general.***

The men's comments about the children are thought-provoking, touching, and, now and then, a little frightening. Some men feel that some children "thirst" after them, since they have no close contact with other men. Some children are uncertain; it seems as though the children find it difficult to understand that there can be men present at the centre and it took some time before they felt themselves safe with the men. This applied first and foremost to the youngest children and, in most cases, to children who did not have a father close to them.

> ***At one place where I worked, there were many single mothers. Many of the children asked me if they could call me Daddy, but it felt wrong. Later I heard that they told children outside the centre that their father worked at the centre;***
>
> ***Once a little boy asked me if he could call me Daddy. I had a long chat with him about his having another father even though he was not here. That evening I thought about him again and I felt I had been small-minded and weak. There were nursery and kindergarten Mummies so why not Daddies? But it feels such a responsibility.***

The report emphasises the research that has shown that the father – the man – plays an important role in the life of a child. By their very presence, the men give the children a male model and become a natural part of the children's existence. They can help the children develop their ideas of what is masculinity.

In the interviews with the women the low wages were stressed. A number of women also said that sometimes they had a bad conscience about having too little time for the children – this was only expressed a few times by the men. Those women who worked together with men could very quickly, and without hesitation, bring out the difference between male and female workers. They brought out many positive things about employing men. Staff co-operation was mentioned. With regard to the children, the female staff mentioned:

They are positive male models.

It is good for all the children who do not have fathers and there are quite a few of those;

It is good for a child to see both men and women in care work;

It gives the child an extra something. We nurse the children more, take them on our laps and explain things, while the men are more directive;

Men are tougher with the children. We women are softer;

Men play tougher games like wrestling and ball games.

With regard to parental co-operation, it was said that fathers spend more time at centres with male workers, than at centres where only women are employed, and that the men dare to say things more directly to the parents. The most negative comment was that men often leave the job. Also, some women said that the men are given special treatment. They get a lot of attention for what they do, and in fact just for being there. They feel this to be unfair, but, as the women said, it is not the men's fault. Other negative aspects are that men forget the practical jobs and that they will not do these while they are together with the children. The men use their time on planning and being together with the children. The women would do this too, but they have to look after the practical work. It should be pointed out, however, that the women said that the men are not all the same.

Finally, among that group of women who have never had any experience, or only limited experience of working together with male colleagues, most thought that it was alright to have male employees. Some were clearly against the idea, first of all because they believe that men do not understand children; they do not recognise the signals children give out, but just continue to play with them. Then they consciously avoid the practical jobs. These women who have little or no experience of working with men also have difficulty in expressing exactly what men can contribute to children, staff relationships and contact with parents.

From the interviews, it came out that the men found it hard to believe that they would be pedagogues in 10 to 20 years time. However, this was also true of the women. The report concludes:

> ***If politicians and civil servants want to see future childcare services as mixed gender workplaces, they must understand that men are not the same as women, even if they have chosen a female job. Men demand wages and advancement possibilities in keeping with their education. Men do not show the subordination, patience and loyalty that have been characteristics of women. These are not characteristics of the profession but of gender.***

II. MEN IN CHILDCARE SERVICES,

OR NOT?

In this section, I set out arguments for the employment of men in childcare services, as well as some arguments against the idea. The arguments "for" take up the most space and carry the most weight, as the perspective of the discussion paper is that the advantages easily offset the disadvantages and difficulties involved in employing men.

The section is divided into five themes, where reasons are given for employing more men – for the sake of:

- the children
- staff cooperation
- the parents
- men themselves
- the labour market, in particular to support the aim of equal opportunities.

The main reason is for the sake of the children, which is why this theme takes up most space.

Childcare centres do not have too many women, but they have too few men.

When female pedagogues are asked, the majority want men to be employed. Those who are against the idea or are hesitant have often never worked with men, or only with a few with whom they have had bad experiences. It is not only in the Nordic countries that positive comments are heard. Even in the United Kingdom, which is one of the few countries holding a strong attitude against men in the childcare services, in a study of staff employed in family centres 90% of the women said they wanted men to be employed and would like to see more appointed (Ruxton, 1992). Interestingly enough, a larger proportion of women than men felt that more men should be employed. As the report concludes:

The evidence of the questionnaire and interview material presented here, points to the need for a more sensitive appraisal of male participation that avoids the rigid categorisation of 'advantage' and 'disadvantage'
(Ruxton, 1992, p.35).

One cannot say that male staff are better or worse than females, but that they are different.

1. For the sake of the children

The main reason for getting a more equal gender mix among workers in childcare services is that it will improve the quality of the daily life of the children attending these services. Another quality improvement can be that it helps children to be brought up with an awareness of equality. In schools, equality amongst children has been focused upon as an issue. The European Commission's Equal Opportunities Unit, in cooperation with DG XXII (Education, Training and Youth), has funded a series of research projects which look at Equal Opportunities in Education, including gender bias in curricula, training needs for teachers, and the sensitisation of parents to gender issues[4]. But issues of equal opportunities amongst children under school-age have been overlooked in most places. Equality amongst children requires that staff adopt a conscious gender pedagogy which respects and values every individual girl and boy, and which creates physical environments and activities all of which oppose limited gender roles.

In the childcare services, children are affected both by the presence and by the absence of men (Female pedagogue, Denmark).

To a great extent, the following is based upon the Danish – and partly upon the Nordic – debate on this problem. The context of this debate is the specific Danish pedagogy that puts emphasis on children's autonomy and self-determination and the importance of play in children's development, where adults have the role of participants rather than experts. It is generally believed that it is not only adults who influence the gender identity and gender roles of children. Children themselves are also active in creating this together with other children. Even though my focus is on Danish experience, a lot of what follows can also be used to reflect upon what a 'mixed gender' work group would mean in childcare services where the daily life was very different from the Danish.

Boys and girls are all individuals, each with his or her own characteristics. When you compare groups of boys and girls, however, some general differences are found. It is these general differences that I will focus upon here. It must be made quite clear that in some cases broad generalisations will be made – for example "boys are unruly". It does not mean, however, that all boys or all girls have these characteristics or that they are only found among boys or girls – but that there are certain characteristics that are more noticeable in boys or girls and often certain characteristics that are considered by adults as problematic for either boys or girls.

The feeling amongst equal rights supporters in Denmark had long been that the best way to achieve equality is to give everybody – both boys and girls – the same opportunities in childcare centres. All children should take part in the same activities without taking gender into consideration. A neutral gender-classification was the ideal. However, it has been shown that this does not necessarily lead to a breaking down of the traditional gender roles.

4. *Further information may be obtained from the European Commission's Equal Opportunities Unit (DGV/A/3), 200 rue de la Loi, B-1049 Brussels.*

About 10 years ago a new debate started about the unruly boys in the 4 to 6 year old group who cause great problems for the workers (female?) in childcare services. There was even a book published in Denmark about "The Poor Boys" (Zlotnik, 1984). In this debate, many saw the employment of men as a partial solution to the problem because they would understand the unruly boys better and can therefore start activities to satisfy the needs of these children. Here the gender of both the children and the staff came into focus.

Getting more men employed in childcare services should also take place in order to assure the rights and needs of children. In the United Nations Declaration on children's rights, children are assured of their rights to have contact to two parents – so why should children not have this right in the social care sector as well.

Later on, it was not only the unruly boys who were discussed, but also the "gentle girls". Girls should also be given special attention. Furthermore, it was recognised that the interplay between boys and girls is also important:

... each gender has its own characteristics and identity that should be given special thought and consideration. This, in principle, should in no way mean that the aim of equal opportunities is removed *(Milde, 1995, p.6).*

And this is where the debate stands today.

Relationships between boys/girls and male/female staff

That boys and girls are different and develop in different ways is also reflected in the childcare services. Boys and girls choose different games and activities. By this means, they give the staff different challenges.

Girls spend more time on fantasy games, routine activities and pictures and shapes, where guidance from an adult is allowed. Girls' games often take place in groups of 2 or 3 and the dynamics in the games are found in the interplay between those involved – in relationships. Best friends and closed groups figure prominently – who is "in" and who is "out". To accept or reject one another is an important part of the game. Intrigue too is often part of the game and girls have to accept being rejected, and this can be hard. During their games girls develop a competence to negotiate with each other and to understand feelings. Girls' games involve the home: father, mother, children and relationships. They organise their games and there are many rules. They also prefer to play indoors. At the same time, girls can harmonise with adults. They like to be together with them and to help them. It also seems that girls can play boys' games, but it seldom happens that boys play girls' games.

For example, why is it so important for a girl to have a friend? Why this self-righteousness and insistence upon planning and rules amongst girls? Why will boys not pay attention and be a little less conspicuous? Why this insistence on being first, biggest and strongest? (Female psychologist, Denmark).

The theory that boys develop a traditional sex role by playing war-games is the same as saying: I am not going to cuddle my child any more, otherwise he will grow up to be a pampered adult. Boys who are not allowed to experience their traditional gender role are those who grow up to be ultra-masculine adults (Male psychologist, Denmark).

Boys spend more time on construction games, spontaneously structured games and games that appear uncontrolled and wild. Their games often involve larger groups. It is easier for others to join in their games. The important thing is the position one holds in the hierarchy. Boys' games are functional games and are very action and subject oriented. They play frantically, for example war, the battle between the "baddies" and the "goodies". They fight and through this manage to try out the cultural rules for boys concerning physical development and fighting. These rules are very well regulated. Their games usually take place outdoors. Nothing is pre-planned.

How do the pedagogues and other workers in childcare services feel about this difference between boys and girls? Is there a difference in the way female and male staff react to it? As mentioned earlier, the debate in the Nordic countries has concentrated very much on the unruly boys who cause problems in childcare centres. These active boys are very much "on the go", and this is considered to be very positive, but they are also considered to be unruly, disturbing and disruptive. They are reprimanded for their noise and for taking up too much room. It is obvious here that the physically small rooms in centres lead to the 'boys culture' having to express itself in rooms where it is difficult for the boys to have enough space. The 'boys culture' has traditionally been an outdoor culture.

Nordic studies of school classrooms for younger schoolchildren show that teachers spend 80% of their time on **boys.** Partly reprimanding them to keep order, but partly, interestingly enough, because they address themselves much more to boys than to girls in order to create dialogue. They find the contribution of boys to a dialogue is more exciting than that of girls, who tend to be more reproductive and "nice". This means that girls repeat and do not bring anything new into the dialogue. This applies to both male and female teachers. During recent years this picture is undergoing change. This is especially the case for some of the girls, who now participate very actively and bring new ideas into the classroom.

Activities in nature and an outdoor life are associated with something that can be described as masculine. Using adventures in nature and giving children experiences of outdoor activities can be a way of getting men to discover childcare services as a realistic place to work. Perhaps this approach says something, in crude terms, about the difference in the male and the female pedagogic roles: the man meets the child by way of manipulation of the surroundings; the woman meets the child through direct, emotional engagement (Male tutor, Norway).

In the case of children in childcare centres, one can put forward the thesis that the same applies. That on the one hand boys are more difficult and noisy; but that on the other hand

... they are the ones that adult pedagogues think are lovely. Perhaps this is because the boys reflect the adult female's own project – she understands the intimacy of girls, so her own adult project is to tackle an obstacle beyond her limits *(Dagbladet Information, 1995, p.9).*

So, what about the **girls?** In the debate about boys and girls it is nearly always presumed that girls and their games are respected by female workers, who recognize the girls' way of being together and their games. Also, the

'indoors culture' of childcare centres is more 'pro-girl'. There is nearly always a 'dolls' corner' and many girls' activities. However, Jan Kampmann, a child researcher in Denmark, raises a query about this 'pro-girl' environment:

> ***At first, the girls may benefit from the adult females' feelings of recognition, but, in this recognition, there is not always respect for certain behaviours: in particular girls' ability to understand the complete range of feelings. On the contrary, the pedagogues are actually irritated more by the girls. They simply cannot cope with certain behaviours of the girls and subconsciously choose to ignore them (Dagbladet Information, 1995, p.9).***

The only research that I have found about how children are affected when men are employed is from Sweden (Carlquist, 1990). Two childcare centres, where equal numbers of men and women were employed, form the basis for the study (the researchers believe that these were the only two childcare centres with equal numbers of men and women employees in the whole of Sweden at that time). The same methods were used as in an earlier study of traditional childcare centres, where the majority of employees were women (Kärrby, 1986), in order to give a comparison with what happens when both men and women are employed. Gunni Kärrby touched in her study on children's relations to the female pedagogues.

In the childcare centre with equal numbers of female and male employees there is the same tendency as in a traditional centre – for boys and girls to choose different games and activities. At the same time, there are other interesting features:

- It appears that the girls are affected most by the fact that men are employed, at least with regard to their choice of activities.
- All the children occupy themselves more with activities involving construction and movement. This confirms statements from both male and female pedagogues that men influence children towards spatial accomplishments.
- For both boys and girls there is an increase in social games and in social relationships when they are not playing their games. There is more dialogue between the children and the adults, and amongst the adults themselves.
- The children have more contact and dialogue with the male workers than with the female workers and this applies more to the girls than to the boys.

Here the writer asks: since dialogue and contact are governed to a great extent by whoever is actually in the vicinity, are male workers more accessible? Or do the children prefer to choose the male workers? And if so, why? Does fathers' or men's "stimulating style" enter into it – as Pruett, who has studied the father role, expressed it?

It is often said that women can do several things at the same time. Do women have a more general overview and ideas about the children and making plans, so they find it more difficult to deal wholeheartedly with the children? Do the children feel this, and therefore prefer contact with the men? These questions must remain unanswered until more research is done on the subject. However, the fact that the behaviour of the children changes when men are employed is clearly shown in this study.

Children of single parents

Male staff can be used to encourage and support lone fathers, who can be extremely distraught and confused, or indeed can be used to encourage and support any fathers who take on childcare responsibilities (Male researcher, UK).

One of the arguments for the employment of more men in childcare services concerns the children of single parents – usually women – and applies to both boys and girls. These children lack a male figure to identify with at home and a male worker can be such a person. The same thing applies to children with "ever-changing" fathers. That these children have an intense need for a stable, positive male figure is confirmed by statements from many male workers who also talk about how the children become closely attached to them. This does not only apply to boys, but to a great degree to girls as well. This means that the employment of male pedagogues is specially important where there are many single parents and families facing difficulties.

Some people go even further in the argument for employing men. If boys grow up in an almost exclusively feminine environment, where they only meet women at home, in childcare centres and in the first classes at school, it creates ultra-masculine boys/youths who lack confidence and can become violent. To explain away violent youth in this way sounds as though women are being given the blame for these violent young people. Many other reasons must be brought in and often all of these will be simplified. The employment of men in childcare services is not a cure for the problems of certain groups of children, but it may help.

There is a great need for male pedagogues and assistants in every childcare centre in Denmark. Not least in socially deprived areas with many single mothers and family problems. Let me give an example. The parents of two children at the childcare centre got a divorce. The older child missed his father badly and so he used me as a negative model. For 3 months he ridiculed me by saying that his father was better than me. He was allowed to go on doing this and he finally got over it. Girls, whose mothers live with a number of different men who come and go quickly, also use me as a stable male figure. They find out that men can be relied on (Male pedagogue, Denmark).

Gender pedagogy

The fact that boys and girls are different in some ways and choose different games and activities, gives different challenges to those employed – both female and male – in childcare centres. The daily pedagogic work must take these differences into account if the needs of both boys and girls are to be covered.

In Denmark today, some childcare services work consciously with gender pedagogy in which it is emphasized that specific gender behaviour must be reflected in pedagogic work. These considerations must apply whether there are only females, a few males, or a lot of males employed – in other words irrespective of the gender mix of the staff. There are many strategies and experiments.

At the top of the list is the philosophy that respect is shown for all children, both boys and girls, and for their different needs:

> ***something that we felt was a basic requirement for successful equal rights work was the emphasis on the importance of all children and their different needs (Milde, 1995, p.16).***

For example, the games of boys, including war games, should be considered as good as other games. Previously boys were subjected to many prohibitions, but today many of these have been lifted:

> ***this is, at least, a good start, because, for one thing, it is difficult to grow up with a positive attitude towards one's own gender when one is often told that the things one finds amusing, exciting and important are basically wrong and are forbidden (Milde, 1995, p.60).***

By the same token, girls' games are to be respected.

Work is being done to change the physical environments, both indoors and outdoors, so that there is room for the activities of both boys and girls. The adults should create exciting and inspirational surroundings.

Some childcare services consciously create gender-divided activities where both boys and girls are separated, based on the principle that the difference must be made in order to create equality. One childcare service in Iceland has adopted a radical approach with the creation of gender-divided groups where the children are only mixed for a part of the time (Kruse and Olafsdóttir, 1992). They do not want to employ male personnel, however. Another project has given priority to the girls, and this has

> *As they become more autonomous, girls do not develop the ability of defining their limits and boys do not develop the ability of intimacy. Looking ahead it could therefore be an idea, on the one hand to understand and accept the needs children have – for girls, intimacy/closeness; for boys, to be strong, to have control and to limit themselves – but, at the same time, to discuss how they can develop the other sides of themselves. For girls this would mean, amongst other things, the ability to set boundaries and the right to say "No" and, for boys, the ability to accept feelings and the sensitive side of themselves ... (Female psychologist, Denmark).*

affected the behaviour of the boys. It was also found in this project that the relationship between the boys and girls became more equal and they played together more (Milde, 1995).

One childcare centre in Denmark is now talking about caring boys and loud girls. Here the aim has been that girls should learn to say "No", and that boys should learn the "role of caring". Some staff are aware that boys may care in a different way from girls.

To bring children up with a sense of equality demands that pedagogues respect and value all children and their individual needs. They must also create stimulating environments inside as well as outside for these different needs. At the same time, the pedagogues must be aware of the gender of the children in their choice of activities. Probably, these policies and recommendations for action can more easily be fulfilled by a mixed-gender work group that will contain a greater diversity of masculine and feminine traits than a single-gender group. A single-gender staff group has greater difficulty in treating children equally and "educating" them in equality – because children do not do what we say they should do, but they do what they see we do.

It is also clear that female workers can never replace men as 'identification figures', nor can many of them show interest in rough/wild

At one and the same time, accept what boys and girls are, but show them alternative possibilities, partly by being good examples, and partly by providing inspirational surroundings and experiences. Care and closeness – generally equal and reciprocal relationships – are good key words for action. Both boys and girls should be assured of their rights to be children and should not be forced to integrate and conform too soon.
(Female psychologist, Denmark)

In the case of boys, it is also important to have:
- *Space – space for and acceptance of boys' activities*
- *Men close to them in their daily life*
- *The right to understanding adults around them. To feel feelings and the gentler side of themselves and to have these accepted.*
- *Women close to them who can understand and respect boys as boys, be part of them and be active.*

In the case of girls, to have:
- *The right to limit themselves and to say "No"*
- *Both women and men around them while growing up*
- *Adults close to them who accept their characteristics instead of just praising them for cleverness and their achievements ...*
- *Adults who are not "over verbal" and explain, explain, explain ...*

(Female psychologist, Denmark).

games in the same way as many male workers can – yet these are a vital part of the activities in any centre. The employment of men is not only a question of a traditional division of work between men and women. And it is far too simple to characterize the difference in the male and the female pedagogic roles as "the man meets the child through the manipulation of surroundings; the woman meets the child through direct, emotional engagement" (Milde, 1995, p.67). For example, both men and women do care, but have different caring cultures and do it in a different way. In this way there will be a focus on the question: what is care?

In a Finnish study of 68 female and 126 male pre-school staff the conclusion was also very positive:

the present study suggests that male and female teachers can complement and counterbalance each other and together guarantee the variety in activities and role models to the benefit of both boys and girls, and supports the recruitment of more men to the predominantly female-staffed day care centres *(Tamminen, 1994).*

But many years will pass before even a substantial minority of men are employed in services for children. So as long as women are in the majority in childcare services, it is important that they are conscious of gender-pedagogy and that they show their masculine traits. They must respect the culture of boys, but also that of girls. In the course of their professional work, they must show respect to children of both genders, and give them physical environments and varied, exciting activities that challenge limited gender roles.

Many of the problems we call 'specific gender problems' are actually normal pedagogic problems. The situation in the 'chat circle', where the boys sit impatiently just waiting for the chance to speak and then hold the floor for as long as possible, is a sign of our own bad planning. We would not accept it if we were 20 adults sitting and waiting for the only butter dish to reach us! Children cannot wait so long for something that, in reality, they are not interested in – and then it is the boys who are the first to become impatient (Male pedagogue, Denmark).

Adults should respect the play culture of children – also when girls are 'affected' and boys are unruly. Leave the young ones to play in peace, also when their games develop into extremely traditional gender roles – they are searching for their gender identity (Male researcher, Denmark).

Boys should not be turned into girls, nor the opposite. That is not the intention. The aim must be to give the optimal possibilities, to accept that every individual has both a masculine and a feminine side – only with this can we be complete beings (Female pedagogue, Denmark).

Sexual abuse

A particular argument against employing men is that men may sexually abuse the children. This argument is particularly prominent in the United Kingdom. It does not appear at all in the Danish debates. This does not mean that no examples of sexual abuse in childcare services are to be found; but the few examples found are never used as an argument against the appointment of male staff. Altogether, this discussion seems totally incomprehensible in the Danish context.

There has been no research into the scale of the problem (of men abusing children) in nurseries. What is certain, says Mrs. Elliott, director of the child protection charity Kidscape, is that paedophiles gravitate towards such jobs. "It is very easy to entrap young children, and the under-fives are perfect" she said. "They are more easily manipulated and less likely to tell. I would look with great suspicion on a man who specifically wants to work with nursery age children" (Daily Telegraph. 04.10.1993).

I think not allowing a man to take kids to the toilet is a protection for him as well as for the children. I don't like it. I would like to change it. But I've worked with abusers for nearly 30 years and I can still be fooled. These people are plausible, charming, cunning, manipulative and they are compulsive. For anyone who sexually abuses kids, nursery age children are a dream come true because they're too young to testify in court and they get confused. So anybody who abuses kids will be attracted to work in that area. And although I hate saying it, I think that any precautions we can take that make it possible for men to work with children make sense (Michele Elliott, quoted in Dodd, 1995).

In the UK, this argument has even been carried to the extreme of proposing that men should not work with smaller children in childcare services, since abuse takes place frequently, the majority of sexual abuse cases involve men and it is not possible to distinguish, psychologically or emotionally, between "abusers" and other men:

Bearing these facts in mind we can link them to the feminine concept of a spectrum of male oppression ... a spectrum which runs from rape, murder, and sexual abuse at one end to routine acts (such as 'putting other people down' or talking over them) at the other end, i.e. daily acts of oppression inflicted by all men on women, children, and other men ... Such an analysis indicates that all males have the potential to move up and down the spectrum from routine acts of oppression to instances of violence, sexual or otherwise. (Pringle, 1992, p.11).

This debate in the UK has led to many direct and indirect restrictions on men in their pedagogic work with children, e.g. not to put children on their laps, not to change a nappy without a female employee being present – all in all, major restrictions with regard to physical contact. These restrictions are advocated as being in the interests of both the children and male workers. However, in a recent case in the UK, a male worker in a private nursery took his employers to an industrial tribunal on the grounds of sex discrimination because as a male worker he was not allowed to take girls to the lavatory – and won his case.

It must be extremely unpleasant for men to work in an atmosphere of constant suspicion and with such a public debate. In this case men's sexuality is focused upon, while this does not occur at all with women. Another way in which male sexuality is focused upon is the belief that many male pedagogues are homosexual. Again, one never hears this suggested for female employees.

Some male workers in the United Kingdom, while recognising the need to protect children from the risk of abuse, have put forward more positive and pro-active measures. At a conference, they recommended a range of policies for making childcare services safe: staff training and the raising of self-awareness about listening to children, child development (including sexual development), how abuse occurs and signs of abuse; enabling staff to take responsibility; parental involvement; assertiveness groups for children; higher staff to child ratios; and careful selection procedures. They summed up as follows:

> ***The power of abuse lies in secrecy. If the culture of an institution is based upon empowerment and openness where adults and children are encouraged to speak for themselves, then the potential for abuse is minimised. When the structure, philosophy and practice of an institution pro-actively addresses issues of free communication where people of all ages and status are encouraged to listen to each other with respect, the abuse of power in relationships between adults, children, men, women, management and workers, service users and service producers, will be avoided. This is clearly an on-going and complex task (Chandler and Dennison, 1995, p.44).***

2. For the sake of staff cooperation

The majority of female pedagogues want to have male colleagues and this is not only true of the Nordic countries. One of the arguments 'for' is that staff co-operation changes for the better.

The equal rights childcare centre in Gothenburg, described in the Introduction, only had positive experiences with a staff group consisting of an equal number of men and women. Conversation was different and broader. The male way of communicating – by being more direct – was very much appreciated by the women, as problems were solved much quicker. Both women and men found very few conflicts among the staff in this centre.

At a Norwegian conference for men in childcare centres, communication between the adult men and women was one of the themes in the group workshops that interested most of the participants. There was a very strong agreement that men's and women's ways of communicating are different

> ***Men are not competent at reading and understanding women's signals. This indirect way that men feel women use to communicate causes problems and misunderstandings in co-operation. Men feel that their own way of communicating is direct and straightforward. This is also the strength behind having a mixed-gender staff: the ways of communication are different, therefore communication takes place through confrontation, and consequently, under favourable conditions, is better than that in a single-gender work group (Milde, 1995, p.65).***

The sharing of the practical jobs in childcare centres is one of the areas where some tensions between men and women may arise. In childcare centres, there are a variety of practical jobs that have to be done every day. From time studies of domestic work in the home we know that women do the lion's share of this work. The pattern seems to repeat itself in some childcare centres. This creates problems, as the women feel that all the practical jobs that women normally do are left to them – clearing up, cleaning, decorating, etc. While the men feel that they should carry out all the typically masculine jobs – banging nails in, changing lighting bulbs, repairing and building. Some men talk about the women's 'housework anxiety' – in other words, everything should be nice and pretty in a feminine sort of way. In other centres (most of those in this paper) neither the men nor the women think that there is a problem about these practical jobs. Here they share equally or have found an appropriate division of labour.

> *There have been significant benefits from the presence of a male staff member and there is a noticeably different atmosphere when he is 'on duty'. As he willingly takes part in 'play' activities with children and in cooking meals it does help challenge the accepted stereotype image of the "male" role in a house – both for women users and the children (Female worker, UK).*

Most literature, interviews and conversations with pedagogues – both male and female – confirm this positive effect on staff co-operation. Those who are negative have usually not tried to work together with men before, or only with one single man. One of the central elements in good teamwork, brought out by many, is that there should be more than one man employed in a childcare centre. A single swallow does not make a summer! Otherwise a man can easily feel himself left out in the cold and the male culture will find it difficult to break through. A solitary man can easily get the status of being something special (a 'token' man). He become isolated and is excluded from the team. This is why it is important to employ more than one man.

Great demands are also made on the men employed in childcare services. They must be 'proper men' and should be unruly and masculine, but, at the same time, they should be domesticated and should not leave the traditional female jobs to the women. Otherwise they get labelled as being children themselves and only wanting to play. Such demands are not made on the women in childcare services (Male pedagogue, Sweden).

Yes, for me it is important that there are more men in the childcare centre. During the periods when I have been the only man in the centre, the women talk together much more as a closed female group and leave me out. Their special interests become dominant. Of course, the opposite would also be true if we had been eleven men and only one woman (Male pedagogue, Denmark).

As more men are employed, they will provide a counterculture to the traditional culture of the centre. The centre can no longer ignore the male way of doing things. The male culture can be a magic mirror for the female pedagogue. As men have other ways than women, it will be necessary to discuss routines, rituals, regulations and so on. In this way employment of men can be seen as providing a potential for development of the centre and can be a dynamic factor in the centre's culture.

In centres where men are employed it is important to be aware of how to exploit the potential advantages from having both sexes employed. The cultures of female-dominated and male-dominated places of work are very different. Changes will often occur in childcare centres where men are appointed and these changes can be both conscious and sub-conscious. It is important here to discuss what changes the newly-formed mixed-sex staff want to make. How can they supplement each other and how can they gain advantage from their differences?

3. For the sake of the parents

The parents of the children are often positive about having male workers in childcare centres. To begin with some express doubts, but very quickly come to accept the situation when they (the parents) see that men are also qualified for the job. As mentioned before, some single parents are especially pleased when centres have male workers. They acknowledge the importance of having men around for their children. Many fathers are pleased with the male presence as well. Several pedagogues have said that, in certain circumstances, it can be easier for men to get a good contact with fathers. 'Man's talk' is used to achieve this good contact and this is valuable, partly in the daily communication about the child, and partly if there is a problem with the child or if some other problem arises. One father, with two children under 6 years of age, whom I interviewed for this paper, deliberately chose a childcare centre with some male workers as he felt himself to be an outsider in centres where only women were employed.

A male presence in a centre can be influential in getting fathers more involved in the centre and in the daily life of the child. This involvement may be, as we have seen above, on an informal, everyday basis. But it can also be more structured. A recent collaborative project involving centres in Italy and the UK has been exploring how centres can support more equal sharing of family responsibilities, and one means of doing this has been through the development of group work with parents. They conclude that:

Having male workers is also important for effective work with fathers and mothers, individually and in groups. Mixed gender groups require male and female leaders and groups for men require male leaders. However in some cases, it may be effective to have male and female workers leading single gender groups ... Activities involving fathers must enter fully into the work with families and children. Knowledge and skills about the needs and rights of fathers and relationships between fathers and children, developed through working with fathers, must become an essential element of all aspects of the work (Ghedini et al., 1995, p.29).

4. For the sake of the men

One of the obstacles to more participation by men in childcare services is the myth that caring for children is not 'men's work'. There is, however, no biological reason for men not to be able to care for children. Research into the care and upbringing of children by fathers clearly shows that men can be just as good as women. It is less about biological barriers than about cultural barriers. The latter are the biggest barriers to getting more men into childcare services.

> ***It is important to point out that the vast majority of men in childcare services say that they are satisfied, that they carry out meaningful work and that this is not due, in the first instance, to their sex, but to the fact that they are professional pedagogues (Male researcher, Sweden).***

Like boys and girls, male and female pedagogues are individuals, each with his or her own characteristics. Again, as previously stated about the characteristics of boys and girls, it is easy to over-generalise with regard to men and women. The gender roles played by men are, to a great extent, culturally defined. Care of children has been, and still is, mainly the domain of mothers; and, when the children are looked after by others, this is normally the task of other women and seldom of men. Looking after children is typically women's work. Because of this, men are usually less experienced in this field.

Some of the generalisations made about men can easily become disadvantages for male workers. They can be expected to adopt a traditional masculine gender role by the female workers, the children and the parents. For example, they can be regarded as not qualified to work with (small) children and expected to love playing football and taking part in other physical activities, workshop activities and so on. Several female pedagogues have stated to me that they have had a man appointed in their centre, but he was not a real man.

In the UK study of family centres, almost all the male workers were pushed into being 'supervisors'. Men were expected to behave in the traditional, disciplinary male role:

> ***they didn't want me because they wanted a caring man, they wanted me primarily as a strong disciplinarian father-figure (Hill, 1990).***

Probably this role is expected more often of men working with children with difficulties, e.g. in children's homes, and with rather older children. But control and discipline is not only the job of male workers. It must be a job for all members of the staff.

The author of this UK study also points out that a man's gender role and masculinity will also be affected by his ethnic and class background, and, of course, this is also the case for women and children in childcare centres.

It was obvious that the mother was gravitating towards me because she saw me as a male figure who would perhaps help her discipline her kids. I don't want to be seen in just those terms (Male worker, UK).

I got a lot of job satisfaction and I've been promoted so the money isn't so bad now. I think pre-school is more about conversation; if you can relate to the children they can relate to you. It's surprising how many of them call me dad. I say, I am not your daddy but I am a daddy. In one of the nurseries they call the male worker "nursery daddy". I think that's a nice explanation (Male worker, UK).

Men working in childcare services should be allowed to show both the masculine and feminine sides of their personality. If a centre wishes to break down traditional gender roles, it is important that the men also carry out the very typical female tasks like, for instance, changing nappies, feeding the children, making food, clearing up, etc. The new experience for some men will be the close contact with children. According to Swedish psychologist Lars Jalmert, this contact can be an advantage for men:

close contact with the child may lead to increased ability to establish close contact with other human beings as well as expressing personal feelings *(EC Childcare Network, 1990).*

Even though this argument is about the father/child relationship, it presumably can apply also to the male pedagogue/child relationship.

Men in social work tend to work with older children and women with younger children. Whilst juvenile justice or youth work setting are dominated by men, the care of under-5s is almost exclusively staffed by women. This reality is reinforced constantly by stereotypical messages about the nature of the work and the appropriateness of "masculine" and "feminine" qualities to each area which are seldom challenged (Male researcher, UK).

5. For the sake of the labour market

Childcare services have been developed with the objective, amongst others, of assuring men and women equal opportunities for employment in the labour market: but childcare itself, as a field of work, is very 'gender-segregated'. Childcare services are, like other social services, extremely female-dominated and typically women's work.

In all countries, very few men work in childcare services. This is particularly true of work with children under 3 years of age. The older the children, the greater the number of men working with them. Men in childcare services are, relative to their numbers, more often leaders than women. Men are appointed either directly as leaders, or they advance more quickly to leading positions and have therefore less direct contact with the children.

It is difficult to find statistics about the gender of the workforce in childcare centres, including overall numbers of women and men employed as well as more detailed information giving a break-down by gender for levels of training and type of job. Table 1 shows some statistics from six countries. The Table suggests that the proportion of men working in childcare services increases with the age of children and can vary from place to place, but that overall the proportion working with children under school age is below 5%.

I was at a conference with 40 pedagogues where there was one other man apart from myself. He stood at the other end of the room and I went over to say 'Hello' to him. Immediately one of the women said: 'Now they're ganging up again!' (Male pedagogue, Sweden)

There are some arguments against men entering a field of work historically developed by women and in which women are in the majority. The main worry is that the men will take over the women's jobs and the more rewarding and pleasant sides of care work. It is also feared that they will quickly take over the leading positions in a field where, for once, women are the leaders. Some people feel so strongly about this that they do not want men employed at all; men are in positions of power everywhere in society and must not be allowed to invade care work.

Said at a conference for all male pedagogues in Norway and where only men were allowed: *A single-gender conference like this can, of course, be criticised – and has been from the equal rights side. However, it is beyond doubt that men in female-dominated work need a forum like this from time to time. Yes, it is perhaps an important factor in keeping men in childcare services, that local, regional and national gatherings are convened to develop a better defined job identity amongst the childcare services' minority group, i.e. the male personnel (Male tutor, Training College, Norway).*

Interestingly enough the research from the equal rights centre in Sweden shows that women retain their strong vocational identity even when men are employed in equal numbers. This indicates that men do not take over the profession. This may not apply in other countries; it could reflect the fact that in Sweden childcare workers are a strong profession and that there has been considerable progress towards achieving equal opportunities between women and men in society. That relatively more men become leaders of centres is correct, but this predominance is not so great – in any way not in Sweden. Here 9% of all leaders are men, compared with 6% of all employees.

Table 1
Male and female staff in services for children: Belgium, Denmark, Spain, Finland, UK and Sweden.

			Male	Female
Belgium – Flemish Community (1994)				
Kinderdagverblijf	(centre for children 0-3)	(N = 2,806)	1%	99%
Onthaalgezinnen	(family day carer)			
– in organised scheme		(N = 8,099)	0.1%	99.9%
– self-employed		(N = 1,265)	4%	96%
Denmark (1995)				
Vuggestuer	(centre for children 0-3)			
– pædagoger	(trained)	(N = 3,333)	2%	98%
– assistants	(untrained)	(N = 3,061)	8%	92%
– total		(N = 6,394)	5%	95%
Børnehaver (centre for children 3-6) and age-integrated centres				
– pædagoger	(trained)	(N = 16,578)	6%	94%
– assistants	(untrained)	(N = 10,592)	14%	86%
– total		(N = 27,170)	9%	91%
Total	(0-6)		8%	92%
Fritidshjem (centre providing care and recreation for school-aged children, aged 6-10)				
– pædagoger	(trained)	(N = 5,745)	26%	74%
– assistants	(untrained)	(N = 3,405)	24%	76%
– total	(6-10)	(N = 9,150)	25%	75%
Finland (early 1990s)				
Nearly 4% of pre-school teachers (working in centres for children aged 0-7) were men				
Spain				
Autonomous Community of Madrid				
Public services for children aged 0-3, 0-4, 0-6		(N= 1,076)	8%	92%
City Hall of Barcelona				
Centres for children aged 0-3		(N = 413)	4%	96%
Sweden (1994)				
Daghem (centre for children 0-6)		(N= 71,311)	3%	97%
Fritidshem (centre providing care and recreation for school aged children, aged 6-10)		(N= 19,570)	16%	84%
United Kingdom (1991)				
In the Census, the occupational group 'childcare and related occupations' was the most gender segregated occupation; over 98% of workers were female.				

Sources: Analysis by Fred Deven of data supplied by Kind & Gezin (Belgium); BUPL; PMF, 1995 (Denmark); Tamminen, 1994 (Finland); Official Statistics of Sweden, 1995 (Sweden); 1991 Census (UK)

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There could be good grounds for the fear that men might take over women's jobs. However, for some years to come only a relatively few men will apply for these jobs; and, with the expansion of the childcare services necessary in all countries, it is clear that while some of these new positions will be given to men, this will still leave many new job opportunities for women. At the same time as implementing a policy to increase the number of men working in childcare services, work should be done to get more women into 'male' jobs and into leading positions.

> *It is sad and frustrating that as a few men do trickle into family centre work they do so only at a senior level ... Similar to the preponderance of men in headships in primary schools, where the workers running family centres almost entirely are staffed by women. Often these men have only a very limited background working with the under-5s and a lack of practical experience in caring for young children, making them inappropriate leaders for staff as well as clients (Female researcher, UK).*

To get an equal division of the sexes in this field of work is an important part of forwarding equal rights generally in society. In many countries, there have been various campaigns to attract more women into male-dominated jobs whereas campaigns to attract men into female-dominated jobs are almost non-existent. If we want a mixed-gender labour market, then men must have an equal share in social care work.

III POLICIES

1. Introduction

This section will focus on policies that can encourage and support more male employment in childcare services. What conditions are necessary to achieve this, and how can these conditions be achieved? Throughout the section, there are series of questions, which can form the basis for discussions among all parties involved in childcare services, including the State, local authorities, private organisations, training institutions, trade unions, staff in services, parents – and last but not least, children themselves. It is not my aim to provide the right answers, but to start a debate. There are also examples of initiatives in a variety of countries, mostly in the Nordic countries, but also in the UK. Hopefully, those initiatives offer good ideas for developing policies to encourage more men in childcare services.

To recruit male workers for the childcare services, and to keep them, demands that the various authorities, organisations and institutions responsible at all levels are involved:

- The State
- Local authorities
- Voluntary and private organisations
- Individual childcare centres
- The training system
- Trade unions
- Parents' organisations
- Job counsellors
- Employment agencies, etc.

To be successful in getting more men employed in childcare services, it is necessary that all these parties are involved in formulating an overall policy and action plan to carry this out. It is also important to establish a system that will monitor, evaluate and review how things are developing in this field.

Co-operation between these parties is vital to achieve maximum effect. The roles of the State and local authorities are especially important in the formulation of an overall policy that will provide a framework in which to act. But other parties are also important, for example, the educational system and job counsellors for the young.

To formulate a policy about male pedagogues touches many other policy areas and, in order to obtain maximum effect, it must be related to and co-ordinated with them. For example:

- Equal rights policy
- Children's and childcare policies
- Family policy
- Labour market policy
- Educational policy.

To achieve the aim of getting more male pedagogues appointed, the following three steps are important:

1. Policy formulation that

- expresses commitment
- specifies the objectives for the groups involved
- identifies the criteria for these objectives
- defines priorities
- sets a timetable.

2. Programme formulation (an action plan) that

- sets targets
- selects measures to be taken to achieve these targets
- stipulates who has responsibility for which measures
- ensures an effective framework for co-ordination between these responsible parties
- defines the resources to be applied to implementing these targets.

3. Monitoring, evaluation and review that involve

- regular monitoring
- evaluation of the effectiveness of the programme
- reviewing the policy at regular intervals
- the formulation of new programmes.

In the following section, these three steps will be examined in relation to the authorities responsible for childcare day services. After this, the main roles of individual childcare centres and training institutions will be discussed. Other important issues, vital for promoting the objective of more men in childcare services, will be examined: advice and support, male networks, professional status and knowledge about and research in the field.

2. The responsible authorities

A. Policy

The authorities with a responsibility for the provision of childcare services and the training of childcare workers vary from country to country. They include the State, regional or local authorities, voluntary and private organisations. However, the main issue here is that all the responsible parties formulate a policy with regard to male workers.

Policy aims must be set out. In these it is important to be precise about which groups are in question. Is it men in services for children under 3 years of age, or is it for the 3 to 5/6 year-olds – or is it for the youngest schoolchildren? And, if necessary, which of these fields should be given priority? The time period in which one must operate is also very important so that the aims set out are realistic.

In feminist research, the concept of "the critical mass" is discussed – in other words, how large a percentage of an under-represented sex is necessary to ensure permanent changes in a sex-segregated place of work. The view is that about 20% is "the critical mass". This shows the importance of employing more than one man in individual childcare centres.

Therefore, one policy target should be to have at least 20% men employed in all types of childcare centres before the year 2005. Another policy target should be that, before the year 2005, the proportion of female leaders in childcare services should be similar to the proportion of women employed generally in these services.

Binding commitments and statements about the importance of recruiting more men for childcare services encourage the possibility of a lively, democratic discussion and debate in many different contexts: in political settings; in trades unions; in staff groups; in parents' groups; in children's groups; in training institutions, etc.

B. Action plan

In order to carry through the policy aims it is necessary to work out action plans that formulate the exact targets and the resources to be used, including the financial resources. Co-ordination between the responsible authorities and other relevant organisations is also necessary.

C. Continuous evaluation, review and formulation of revised policy and action plans

In the action plan, provision must be made for continuous evaluation to check whether the action plan is achieving its stated objectives; otherwise there is no control over the effectiveness of the action plan. In pursuit of this, the policy objectives must be regularly reviewed and new action plans drawn up. These dynamics are vital because the intention to get more men into childcare services will not happen in a period of only a few years. It will therefore require regular revision of policy and action plans.

Questions for discussions

Policy objectives:

- What policy objectives about male pedagogues are found at a national and local level? In private organisations? In other relevant organisations and institutions?
- What types of childcare services are we talking about?
- What age groups of children are we talking about?
- Are there certain types of services or age groups that should be given priority? If so, which and why?
- What is the time scale?
- Should there be special policies and practices concerning the recruitment, training and employment of men to minimise the risk of abuse or accusations of abuse? Or should any policies and practices concerning abuse be general, applying equally to male and female students and staff?

Action plan:

- What action plans exist to enable the policy objectives to be carried through?
- At what administrative levels are these action plans to be found? National and local authority levels? In the private sector? With other relevant organisations or institutions?
- What co-ordination is there between these parties?
- Who is responsible for the action plans?
- Who else takes part in the process?
- What resources are available?
- What financial resources are specified in the action plans?

Continuous evaluation, amendment and formulation of new action plan:

- How does the continuous evaluation of the effectiveness of the action plan in relation to the stated objectives take place?
- How does the formulation of a revised policy take place?
- How does the formulation of revised action plans take place?

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Good examples

- A childcare centre in Valencia in Spain had, for many years, a policy of appointing the same number of women and men so that there was both a man and a woman with every group of children, and the post of leader alternated between a man and a woman.

- Another childcare centre, in Northamptonshire in the UK, has concluded that children are entitled to have male workers.

  This is partly because many children live in lone parent families, in which they have little contact with a male parent. But it is also because of the richness offered by having a mixed staff group, which includes male workers who work directly with the children and are committed to children's learning and enjoy being with them. The Centre believes that young children need experience of men who are not only prepared to play in a rough and tumble way but can also be gentle, calm, nurturing and comforting.

  There have been difficulties in putting this commitment to male workers into practice. Initially some women workers felt threatened by the idea of men working in the Centre. They feared the men would only want management jobs; other fears were less clearly stated but concerned a perceived challenge to the strong female collective of workers that had developed at the Centre. Some workers also wanted to protect battered and abused women who saw the centre as a haven for themselves and their children. Inevitably in a large staff group, some women had negative feelings about men based on their own personal experience and, like some mothers using the Centre, were happier working in a 'male-free' environment. But through training and with the support of the parents, these concerns have been overcome and the Centre has consistently recruited men who want to work with children (Ghedini et al., 1995).

- The Swedish Social and Equal Rights Minister, Bengt Westerberg, convened a seminar in 1993 under the title of *Why will men not work in the day and leisure services?*, indicating political interest in the subject (Socialdepatementet, 1993).

- In 1994, Copenhagen Municipality adopted an action plan for equal rights that aimed to get men into women's jobs and vice versa. This should be undertaken in conjunction with the educational institutions and statistics should be kept

  ... on the number of fathers taking parental leave; employees divided by gender; and the division of gender in various work groups and leader positions. This will, according to the action plan, force the individual childcare institutions to discuss the situation and thereby change their gender policy (Dagbladet Politiken, 10.06.94).

  This example shows the importance of linking together the policy objective of getting more men into childcare services with the policy objective of getting more women into male jobs/trades/professions as well as into leader positions, with the idea of promoting equal rights in many areas.

- For the first time in the history of childcare services in Norway, a conference was arranged for men working in the childcare services. It took place in Stavanger in December 1994. The conference involved co-operation between the Children's and Family Department at State level, Rogaland County and a group of male pedagogues in Stavanger. It brought together 150 participants – in other words, 25% of Norway's male pedagogues.

Amongst the Nordic countries, Norway is the country with the fewest men in childcare services. The involvement of the Children's and Family Department was to focus attention on the recruitment of men for pedagogic training. Apart from recruitment, the aim of the conference was concentrated on questions connected with getting men who work in childcare services to stay; with what a childcare centre is about; and with the problem of communication between men and women (Milde, 1995).

- Bromma Municipality in Sweden started a project to change gender roles and pedagogues' professional roles. The objective was to create a broader context for the development of the personality of children, a better working climate amongst the staff and an easing of the recruitment of men into the childcare services and, in this way, to improve the quality of the childcare services. A broad range of methods was used, including: further training in the form of lectures, study days, study visits, etc.; the opening of a new centre with equal numbers of male and female staff; recruitment; building up a network for the male employees; and research with male workers using a questionnaire. At the same time, a study was to be made to find out the effect that a mixed-gender work group has on children's choice of activities and games. A project leader was appointed for 1 year.

  The evaluation of the project showed mixed results. The further training was reduced as only a few pedagogues enrolled, but a course for all leaders of childcare services in the municipality, at which attendance was compulsory, was a success There were insufficient male applicants for the mixed-gender centre, so this had to be dropped. Also, there was no great interest amongst the male workers in the municipality forming a network; under 10% came, but they had some good meetings. The 80 male pedagogues in the municipality, the majority of whom worked in leisure centres for school-age children, were all sent a questionnaire. The results of this showed that virtually all of them liked their work as male pedagogues. They felt themselves to be valued by children and parents, but felt a lack of support from leaders and politicians. There is a need for them, in particular from boys because the male pedagogues can give the boys something that their female colleagues cannot give them. Some felt a lack of understanding about "boys' activities" and the male point of view amongst their female colleagues, and 25% missed male workmates and male opinions. Only a few could see themselves in the job in 10 years' time and the reasons given for this were: low wages; a wish to try something else; the low status of childcare; uncertainty about the future of childcare services (Carlquist, 1990).

3. The individual childcare centre

It is in the individual centre that the policy and the action plan become reality through more men being appointed. AND, when men are appointed, changes take place in the daily life of the centre. This is supported by the few research results available and by the majority of the female and male workers in childcare centres. Women and men contribute many of the same things in childcare centres, but also many different things. One could discuss and analyze what the individual employee does in his or her job as a professional pedagogue, and what the same person does due to his or her gender.

The centre's policy can discuss the significance of having men employed. Some centres appoint their own staff and can give priority to men if there are qualified applicants. Women and men have different cultures and efforts must be made to ensure both cultures are accepted and valued. In the same way, when men are appointed the discussion arises as to whether the centre wants to retain the traditional gender roles or wants to change them. Individual centres should be aware of the benefits for children, parents and the staff group of using the different potentials of men and women.

Questions for discussion

Pedagogic work with children – gender pedagogy

- What similarities are there in boys' and girls' games, choice of activities and behaviour? What are the differences?
- Are boys' games, choice of activities and behaviour accepted and respected? And the girls'?
- How is the physical environment organised indoors for boys' and girls' games?

  For example there is often a "dolls corner", but is there also a "boys' corner"? What dressing-up clothes are there for the boys; for example, "heroes" clothes like knight's armour, cowboy suits, Batman suits? What dressing-up clothes are there for the girls; for example, dresses, shoes, wigs and "princess" clothes?
- How is the physical environment organised outdoors for boys and girls
- Are other types of activities started, when men are employed?
- Do men and women take part differently in children's games and activities? How?
- Are men better at getting girls into typical boys' activities?
- Do male pedagogues understand boys better than female pedagogues?
- Do male pedagogues have more direct contact with the children, especially the girls, than the women have?
- Are the male workers more accessible than the female workers?
- Are the women better at taking care of the child's complete development and well-being?
- When do the children choose to contact either a male or a female pedagogue?
- Are the women's and the men's ways of taking care different?
- How do the children of single parents – boys and girls – experience male employees?
- What gender pedagogy exists that reflects the specific gender behaviour of boys and girls?
- What are the arguments for and against gender divided activities?
- How is it possible to strengthen the masculine side of the girls and female pedagogues, and the feminine sides of the boys and male pedagogues?

Staff co-operation

- What changes occur amongst the staff when men are employed in childcare services?
- How can the two genders complement each other?
- Do men express their intentions more clearly and discuss less?
- Is the atmosphere amongst the staff different when men are employed?
- Are there fewer conflicts amongst the staff when men are employed?
- How do the women accept the male pedagogues?
- How is the practical work shared out between the genders?
- Is the women's order/disorder threshold lower than the men's and does this create problems in the daily routine?
- Is there a totally equal sharing of all the practical work between the genders, or is the work divided differently between the genders?
- Is it easier at a place of work than in the home to break down the traditional gender roles regarding practical jobs?
- In what context is the sharing of practical jobs in the centre discussed?

Parental co-operation

- How is advantage taken of the difference in the genders of the staff in relation to parental contact?
- Does a mixed-gender work group provide better possibilities for co-operation about the children with both parents?
- Can the male workers talk more easily with the fathers and get their confidence? How?
- Is it easier for the male workers to involve the fathers in the institution's daily routine and thereby in their children's daily life? How?
- Do male workers also improve the possibilities of involving grandfathers in childcare services?

Good examples

- From a very structured daily programme where boys and girls were treated alike, this centre has now gone over to respecting both genders and to treating the children as individuals. The boys can now play "pirates" and the girls can play with their Barbie dolls. The centre is part of the Danish Social Welfare Ministry's project on children's rights to participate in decision-making ...

  The key words are, as stated previously: Respect for the individual child. We do not believe that we achieve greater equality by treating all children in the same way, nor by treating boys as girls and girls as boys – nor by forcing them to play together, to be together and to feel the same way about things.

  We believe that the child who feels respected and who is allowed to pursue his or her own interests and to experience being really good at something, will find so much self-confidence and security, that he or she will obtain the strength to become independent in the future ...

  Caring boys and loud girls. Our boys are not afraid to show they care; they are not afraid to give each other a hug; nor to comfort each other; nor to sit on an adult's lap. And not just that – they do all these things! Our girls are not afraid to speak out and to say what they mean; they do not give up until we have heard every word they have to say. They are not afraid to contradict the boys and us adults (Female pedagogue, Denmark, quoted in Milde, 1995, p.24,29).

- Sheffield Children's Centre is a comprehensive childcare, play and family support service and has been operating for twelve years. For eleven of those years the Centre has implemented its policy of employing 50% male and 50% female staff. This policy and practice was developed to combat gender role socialisation and to challenge and change society's prevailing gender stereotyping. The aim was also to promote gender equality and positive gender role models for children and adults using the Centre's services. It was felt that gender issues needed to permeate all aspects of the centre's life and consequently rather than isolate gender as a single topic for training and development it was considered essential to include it and cultural/anti-racist issues in all areas of policy, planning, monitoring and service delivery.

  The Sheffield Children's Centre not only provides a gender mix but also provide anti-racist and multi-cultural provision. 80% of the staff employed at the Centre are from black and other ethnic backgrounds. The staff offer twelve community languages to users. Male staff from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds provide a dual positive image of gender and race directly to children and adult service users, to colleagues, to their own communities and also to society at large.

  Among other things the centre operates a witnessing policy which means that no member of staff, female or male can change a child unless accompanied by another staff member. The National Men in Childcare Support Network in UK is based at the Sheffield Children's Centre and is serviced by both male and female staff. Lone men in childcare workplaces are particularly vulnerable to allegations, stereotyping and discrimination and male and female workers at the Sheffield Children's Centre offer support to these men via the Network. The Network also breaks down isolation and raises awareness of men in childcare, providing an advocacy and campaigning role. It also aims to promote good practice in relation to gender issues within early years curricula, play programmes and therapeutic interventions.

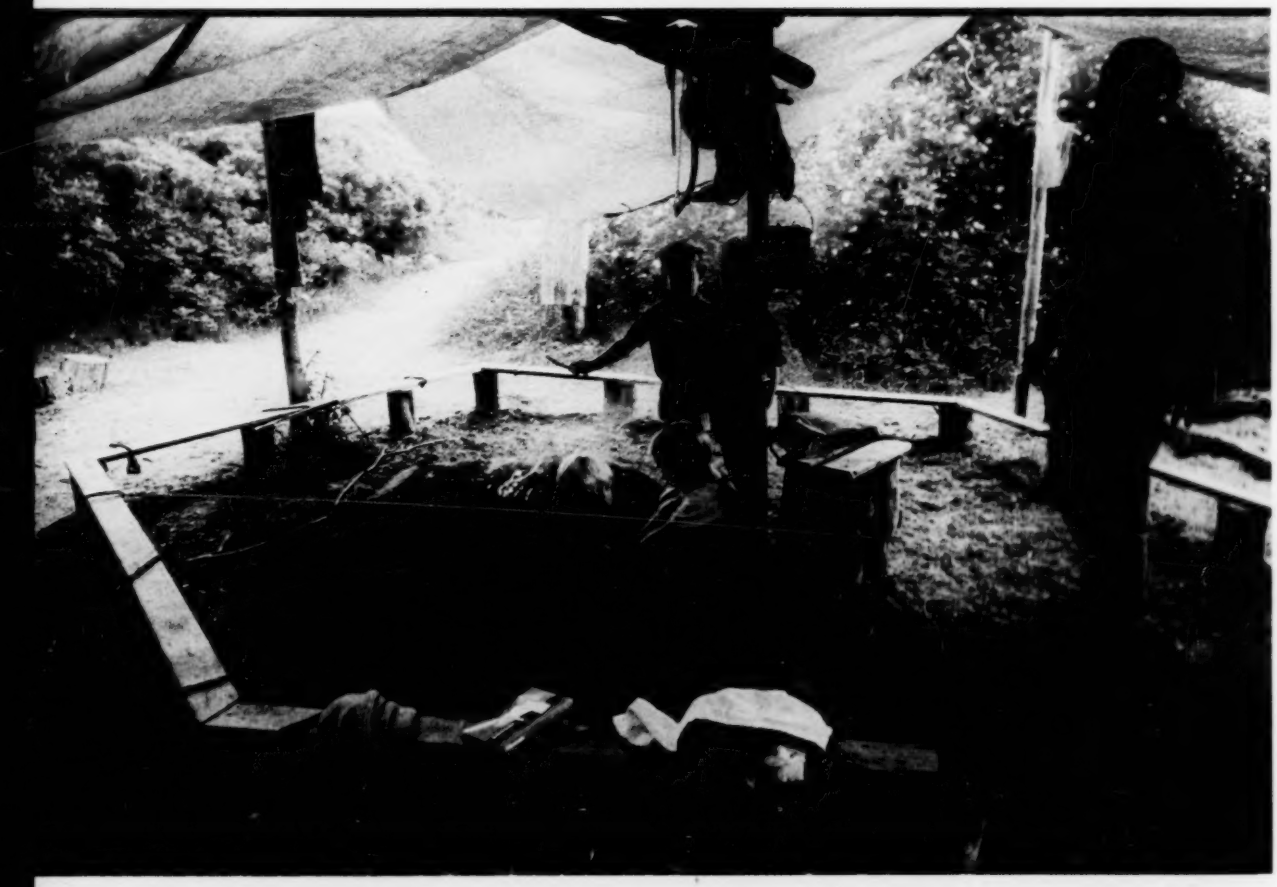
The Centre also takes part in the Careers Guidance Programme in Sheffield in a "Guess my Job" line up in schools. And one of the male nursery teacher says:

> ***Those of us in non-traditional jobs have to give clues and the young people attempt to come up with the job. I've never had a group say what my job is yet. I am a six foot four inch eighteen stone ex-miner. They can't visualise me working with young children. Every time I've told them what my job is they laugh without exception. I often pursue this and the stereotypes pour out of them. This is why I know that my work with children is so important particularly during the formative years when gender roles and attitudes are taking shape.***

4. Training institutions

Training institutions are the main places to promote the recruitment of men into childcare services. If qualified men cannot be found to fill positions, then there is no point in local authorities, organisations or individual childcare centres having fine ideas about employing more men. Therefore, entry into training is the central key to getting more men into the profession. All in all, the training institutions can be the prime movers in getting more men into childcare services. They often have contacts with many individual childcare centres and with the authorities responsible for further training.

It is not only the training institutions giving pedagogic training that are important. From the moment schoolchildren start to consider a choice of work or further education, the complete field of student and job counsellors should inform them that the childcare sector is also for men.



Questions for discussion

- What policies and action plans to further gender equality amongst students are to be found among the authorities responsible for training and in individual training institutions?
- How can job and student counsellors in schools and elsewhere become sufficiently aware that childcare training is also something for men?
- How can information about childcare training be made appealing to men (for example, by qualified male pedagogues talking about their work; by the use of special video films and by brochures about male pedagogues and the training as experienced by men?)
- How can offers of short trials of work or course attendance be made to interested men, including periods at a training college and at childcare centres?
- When presenting themselves, do training institutions stress music, sport, handicrafts, etc., as these are often elements that attract men into childcare?
- How can the actual training environment be made more appealing to men? By the formation of male groups? By more men being enrolled in the same class? by producing specific training-materials?
- What is done in the training to study the differences and similarities between male and female pedagogues and the influence of these on the quality of childcare services?
- When placed in teaching practice in childcare centres is regard given to whether it is a male or female student?
- How can the subject "Male childcare workers" be incorporated into further and in-service training?
- Are there available statistics on how many men relative to women start training?
  On the drop-out rate amongst both genders?

Good examples

- In 1994, a campaign was launched in Viborg County in Denmark to attract more men into childcare work. The campaign called "Children also need men" was based on co-operation between the Employment Office, two trade unions for pedagogues and a training college. The campaign was not restricted to this particular part of Denmark, but was carried out in all the 32 Training Colleges for Pedagogues throughout Denmark. Colourful posters and brochures were distributed and the campaign received massive press coverage.

  The campaign has probably influenced the fact that, in the summer of 1995, a little more than 20% of all students enrolled in Training Colleges nationwide were male, a substantial increase over the last 2 years. It should be noted here that the pedagogic training in Denmark provides a qualification to work not only with children aged 0 to 6 years, but also to work with school-age children in services providing care and recreation, young people, handicapped children/young people, children taken into care or in childrens' homes, etc. These are areas of work that traditionally have had more men employed than childcare centres for children under 6.

  The campaign in Viborg County also involves the Employment Office and Training College in Viborg setting up a course for unemployed men who would like to be pedagogues, but who lack the qualifications. In the brochure for the course it states:

  This course is only for men. The course is for you if you wish to become a pedagogue but lack the necessary qualifications or experience to enrol for a pedagogic training. It can also be something for you if you just want to have a look at the pedagogic field before you enrol ... The training is adapted so that it is particularly relevant to men.

  The course comprises subjects like pedagogy, psychology, social studies, communication, physical training and arts and crafts. The aim is that, on the course, you will get a broad insight into how we human beings function in relation to one another.

  You will be able to influence the contents of the course. By this means, we will come to deal, to a great extent, with the subjects that particularly interest men in the pedagogic field of work. These could be, for instance, acting/clowning, stunts and stage fights, ball games, computers, motorcross, etc.

  We will work intensively with the things that men can contribute to pedagogic places of work. We will endeavour to find out what norms and values men stand for and how these can be used in pedagogic work.

  The course lasts 20 weeks and contains 4 weeks practice at workplaces where pedagogues are employed. Twenty two men started the course in August 1995. For the course, special training material has been prepared: *When men want to be pedagogues – a report for the use of tutors who will train men who want to be pedagogues* (Pedersen and Ærø, 1995).

- Högskolen (the institute for training pedagogues) in Kalmar, Sweden, has started a project called "Come into childcare services, you men!" in order to get more men to train as pedagogues. Posters were made and introductory brochures were sent out to several thousand men in the area. A one week introduction to the profession was made for 30 men in conjunction with the employment agency. The week comprised 3 days at the training college and 2 days at a childcare centre. A questionnaire was also sent out to every male pedagogue in the municipality.

- In 1995, the equal rights consultant attached to the Employment Office in Aarhus County in Denmark took the initiative to launch a campaign called "The recruitment of men for pedagogic training". This is intended to motivate more men to seek enrolment to train as pedagogues. A steering group has been set up comprising two training colleges for pedagogues together with the local branch of the pedagogues' trade union and the Employment Office. The background to the campaign is the desire to increase the numbers of male pedagogues in childcare centres. It has been emphasised in the campaign that children need men because all children have a need for male models. One objective of the campaign has been to promote equal rights in the long term by increasing the number of mixed gender work groups in childcare centres and the likelihood of children experiencing both male and female workers in the centres they attend.

  The campaign has been directed towards interested men, both those employed and those unemployed. Meetings have been held in the four biggest towns in the area at which male students, a qualified male pedagogue and the equal rights consultant have all taken part. At one of the meetings, as an added attraction, "personalities" who work with children – a footballer, a rock musician, etc. – were also invited. The meetings gained much press coverage. The campaign is continuing with a conference day about men as pedagogues, and with special information meetings for men about the pedagogic training. The objective of the steering group for the campaign is that, by the year 2005, 33% of the people enrolling for a pedagogic training will be men.

5. Specific issues

A. Advice and support, male networks

It is important that the responsible authorities and others ensure the possibility of advice and support to mixed-gender work groups, both for individuals and for the work groups as a whole. And it is not only the men who have need of support. Women also need support and advice about the changes in their daily work that occur when men are employed. At the same time, it is important that this advice and support can be actively used to produce change and development.

Male childcare workers often state that they feel themselves to be alone in childcare centres where only one man is employed. Many childcare centres in Denmark give top priority to having more than one man employed. They find it important to have at least two men, otherwise some men can feel themselves dominated by the female culture. If there are more men they can support each other and thereby encourage men to remain in the childcare services.

As so few men are, as yet, employed in childcare services, it is important for them to be able to meet other male employees if they wish to do so or need to do so. The "male network" has, in many places, been the answer to this problem of isolation.

In Gotland municipality, Sweden, the 50 male pedagogues were called in once a month by the municipality to take part in a project that consisted of lectures on male pedagogues, a health profile of the pedagogues together with psychological and pedagogic process guidance. All this took place in working hours. The conclusion was that the men felt themselves strengthened in their roles as men in a female-dominated job.

In some Finnish towns, *"Nalleklubber"* – "Bears' Clubs" – have been formed by the male pedagogues. They meet informally 6 to 12 times a year and they have discussions, take part in various activities like sport, music, tours, etc., write articles to newspapers, and so on. The reason for the formation of these networks was that the men often felt themselves to be alone in the jobs. By meeting in "male groups", this feeling is alleviated. The professional identity of men as pedagogues is strengthened and the special ways men have of doing things are discussed together.

In a district of Oslo, Norway, a "Forum for Men" has been established comprising the male pedagogues in the district who meet regularly and carry out various activities.

Questions for discussion

- What sources of advice and support, for centres and individual workers both male and female, are available for centres with mixed gender staff groups?
- How do these sources of advice and support actively support change and development with regard to mixed gender staff groups?
- Are there any initiatives on offer to strengthen the male pedagogues' network – from the local authority or other responsible authorities, the childcare centres themselves, training institutions, trades unions or other relevant responsible parties?
- What efforts are made to ensure that there is not just one man employed at an individual centre?

B. Wages, employment conditions and status

Poor wages, bad employment conditions and low status are identified by many as the main barriers stopping men choosing to work in childcare services. This reflects the fact that, in many places, men are still the main breadwinners in the family and therefore have greater difficulties than women in surviving on low wages. Male pedagogues lose out when comparing their income with men in other fields of work.

In some countries, wages and employment conditions are lower for pedagogues working with children under 3 years of age than for those working with older children. Often there are more staff with no qualifications or lower levels of training in services for children under 3 years. Also, the work with the youngest children often has the lowest status – it is perceived to involve only physical care (feeding and changing nappies) and to have no pedagogic content. All these factors contribute to the situation that services for the youngest children have the fewest male workers; that women have to accept, and have been forced to accept, working for low wages in a low status job, is another matter.

Trade unions should develop policies and put men on their agenda. Various trade unions have now and then focused upon men in childcare services in their union magazines. For example, in 1992 the Swedish union magazine for pedagogues *Förskolan* ("Pre-school") had a special edition on this subject; the front cover showed a big dolls' house and the title Men in a woman's world. Another example is the Danish union magazine for pedagogues Børn og Unge ("Children and Young People"); in 1995 the front cover featured a very masculine pedagogue with tattoos, a football and "tough" jewellery, plus the title: "You have to be a man to have a sissy job – Photographer Lisbeth Holten has been on the hunt for men in childcare services and found three who have told her why they chose to be pedagogues."

Improvements in wages and employment conditions would be an important lever in raising the status of the job and thereby improving the working conditions of many women while, at the same time, being a way to attract more men into the profession.

Questions for discussion

- Are employers and trade unions working actively to improve wages and employment conditions for workers in childcare services? In what ways are they doing so?
- How can the training of those employed to work with the youngest children be brought up to the level of other childcare workers?
- What should be the length and quality of the basic training to ensure pedagogic work of a sufficiently high standard?
- What continuous and further training is offered?
- What career possibilities are there for childcare workers?
- How are the authorities and other organisations working generally to raise the status and value of childcare services?

C. Research and knowledge

There is a very little research and knowledge on this subject. "Men in childcare services" has been an invisible and unrecognised field. Therefore all types of knowledge are necessary to understand the advantages and disadvantages, the barriers and the best policies to enable increases in the recruitment of men into childcare services.

Questions for discussion

- What research exists about men in childcare services?
- What problem areas have been investigated and what remain?
- How can we get researchers and research funders to take an interest in this problem area?
- What statistics are currently available to monitor and evaluate this field? What statistics are needed? How should they be used?

IV. CONCLUSION

Getting more men into childcare services is a long process that cannot happen overnight. However, it is important to start the process moving. Hopefully this paper has contributed some ideas for action, but, of course, there are many ways forward. These ways depend to a great extent on individual country's political, social and cultural situation.

The main reason to get more men into childcare services is that it will improve the quality of the childcare services and plays a part in supporting equal opportunities for girls and boys in these services. To give children equal opportunities demands a high consciousness among staff about the issue of gender and a gender pedagogy which respects and values every individual girl and boy. Furthermore a good physical environments both indoors as well as outdoors must be created; activities with the children must also be created that reflect a gender perspective. A work group consisting of both genders is better able to create those conditions. But it is important to make experiments and try out different policies both among female and male staff.

Female staff are pleased to have men working in the childcare services and find that staff cooperation becomes better. The parents, too, are pleased with the men, and the men themselves like the job.

Fathers are much more involved in caring for their children today than they were previously – certainly in some countries. They take more leave from work to look after their children when they are sick, they take them to and from childcare services and they take a greater part in their daily care and upbringing in the home. A policy to get more men to take paternity and parental leave can also help to change men's attitude towards childcare centres and, by this means, encourage the recruitment of more men. They will come to understand that both men and women are as important in childcare services as they are in a child's life generally.

The authorities responsible for running childcare services, educational institutions, trade unions and other relevant bodies must take this issue into their policies. There must be constant lively, democratic debate amongst the decision-makers and in the media.

The few men in the childcare services are only a part of the gender segregated labour market that also contains divisions by status and influence. Male-dominated jobs have a high status and influence and the opposite is true of female-dominated jobs. Work in care and welfare has a low status and influence but, against this, it offers close contact with children and elderly and sick people and a lot of emotional satisfaction.

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There is a need for both men and women in the childcare services, just as there is a need for both genders overall in society. To get equal opportunities and to achieve equal status between men and women requires that men are involved in childcare services on an equal footing with women. By the same token, it demands that, on the other side, women get work in male-dominated fields and get an equal share of the political and economic power in society.

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